

# RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Department of Natural Resources

Room 314

July 9, 2002

## Minutes

### Member Present:

GARDNER, Kirk - BLM  
SCHLOTTHAUER, Bill - Water Rights  
PARKER, Randy - DAF  
DANIELS, Ronald – DOGM  
MILLS, Erik - DWRe  
CARTER, Kevin - SITLA  
ELDREDGE, Sandy – UGS  
CANNING, Michael - DWR  
PITKIN, Jay – DEQ – Water Quality

### Others Present:

WRIGHT, Carolyn - GOPB/DNR  
LANDURETH, Brenda - DNR/ADMIN  
HARJA, John – GOPB/DNR  
JUSINO, Cesar - NRCS

## **I. Approval of Minutes**

Bill Schlotthauer called the meeting to order at approximately 9:03 a.m. Ron Daniels made a motion to approve the June 11, 2002 minutes. Cesar Jusino seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## **II. Report from Agencies on Any Anticipated Projects**

Cesar Jusino, Watershed Planning Coordinator will be the new RDCC representative from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Cesar Jusino recently provided an update on the status on the Farm Bill at the River Basin Coordinating Committee. NRCS fiscal year starts October 1, 2002, so some new projects will be coming to RDCC for review and comment due to Farm Bill changes in funding availability. Cesar Jusino announced that the Farm Bill was approved with some program changes.

He presented the following update on the The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP):

- Cost share was increased 75 percent
- No costs will be included in ranking sheet
- No bid down is accepted
- Non-cost shared practices will not be included in the contracts
- Maximum cost-share limit for entity/individual was raised from \$50,000 to \$450,000
- Term of the contract is up to 10-year contracts/minimum one year

- Can install a practice and receive cost share the first year of the contract
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors will begin next fiscal year (installing practices/certification)
- Limited resources farmer and new farmers 90 percent cost share requests after August 13, 2002
- Geological or Conservation Priority Areas are eliminated
- EA funding must go back to Financial Assistance (\$29,000)
- Increase to 60 percent of the amount of EQIP that must benefit livestock related projects

Other changes on streamline EQIP and Conservation Research Program (CRP), which is also part of the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Secretary Anne Venneman requested that each agency check with other agencies for concurrences, so CRP will be administrated by the Farm Service Agency and NRCS will continue to administer the EQIP program including the technical side of implementation and writing contracts for the CRP program. Concurrence for the payment will be connected with the FSA.

FSA and NRCS will work together in developing new contracts. State Conservationist stated that the money will stay in Utah.

Bill Schlotthauer stated that RDCC will be asked to review and comment on projects as they get up and running from local soil and water conservation districts, NRCS and FSA.

Upcoming project funding depends on legislative budget decisions. Randy Parker, mentioned that new resources of the Farm Bill will be tough with 10-15 years of budget reductions, which will make technical assistance will be challenging. The matching money on salinity has been increased and we are currently putting more attention in this area. The 319 Program will struggle to find opportunities with the increase in cost share through NRCS. It will be challenge, but good for farmers and ranchers.

Drought conditions are severely impacting agriculture in Utah, estimates 10-15 percent reduction in farm sales, cattle herds are being liquidated, alfalfa crops and rangelands have been impacted. NRCS appreciates what the Department of Natural Resources is doing to allow deepening of wells and in helping to provide additional access to water.

The state of Utah is currently experiencing exceptional drought conditions which are spreading from Washington, Kane and San Juan counties further north into Carbon, Emery counties and Uinta Basin.

The last time the Palmer Index reached this magnitude over 100 years ago. We could have three additional years of drought, if we are experiencing a similar drought cycle.

There was a brief discussion regarding water conservation and water quality practices including terraces, irrigation and salinity reduction. There are some good systems along the Colorado River. NRCS is working on nutrient management.

Kirk Gardener stated that BLM is also addressing drought issues, 1) springs are drying up and wild horses do not have access to water, and 2) livestock grazing season will likely be shortened. BLM is identifying actions and a process to deal with drought conditions better.

Kevin Carter stated State Institutional Trust Lands (SITLA), is proceeding on a land exchange with the federal government in the Cedar Mountain area in to trade out scattered sections. The legislature approves land exchanges over 10,000 acres. This land exchange involves trading 110,000 acres of trust land for 135,000 acres of federal land.

The governor, the Secretary of the Interior, and Secretary of Agriculture signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) authorizing the land exchange a few weeks ago. Most of the land is in Wilderness Study Areas except for Cedar Mountain. The state legislature is reviewing this during this special session. The House of Representatives unanimously passed a special resolution to ratify the MOU yesterday and it goes to the Senate for approval today.

It also has to be ratified by U.S. Congress. The issue was brought to a subcommittee few weeks ago and next Wednesday it will be brought before House Natural Resources Committee for approval.

There are some concerns that the land exchange will facilitate a federal action, since we are ahead of the curve in regard to proposing the land exchange (previously the process involved the federal government capturing lands prior to the land exchange).

The land exchange will be submitted to RDCC this week. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Division of Wildlife Resources have had maps for review and comments to avoid any wildlife concerns. Land exchange and access issues have been difficult to resolve with the lands being scattered. The MOU does recognize and preserve any valid and existing rights.

Several thousand acres of desert tortoise habitat in Washington County are included in this land exchange and will be conveyed to the federal government. An additional few thousand at conveyance and another 3,000 acres will convey upon payout from a coal mine that SITLA will be acquiring and revenues will help buy off the values of the tortoise habitat and those other tortoise habitat parcels that will be conveyed to the federal government. This will remove most of the desert habitat from state lands except for the far western edge of the habitat conservation area.

John Harja stated that some interesting issues surfaced in this land exchange involving listed and threatened species. Plants are usually not protected on private property and only animals are protected on private property. This land exchanges allows SITLA to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the protection of listed plant and animals. This is probably the first time that any state agency has taken this type of action.

A Western Land Exchange group criticized that land exchanges are ripoff for the federal government. This group also criticized the West Desert land exchange. Without offering specific comments they have asserted that the lands are dumps and are otherwise not of equal value. They have filed a FOYA request with the BLM. This land exchange did not get bogged down with appraisals by using focusing on a business approach. The information was put together using a process to assist with decision-making and to determine a fair market value.

In August or September, the BLM planning process for the Price, Vernal and Richfield areas are approaching the alternative generation part of the process. The state is a cooperating agency. Holly Roberts a BLM planner is currently meeting with various state agencies to introduce the planning process and to facilitate data collection. The next few months the BLM will be conducting alternative generation meetings. The BLM has an anticipating public review and comment by early 2003.

Bill Schlotthauer stated that a groundwater distribution methodology will be presented to the governor, his staff and other interested parties in August. This project is one of the top five Division of Water Right's (DWRi) projects. DWRi is migrating to the new operating system, which will be completed by December 2002. There may be some interruption in service.

### **III. Review of Proposed Items as Listed on the Project Management Library**

Project Number #1954 involves the development of a livestock watering system out in the Uinta basin to improve, rearrange and expand their current well system. They will need a change application to add some points of diversion. Additional water system improvement projects will require RDCC review when people begin to spread out the water that they currently have available. The Bureau of Reclamation is currently looking at the rehabilitation of Deer Creek Reservoir, which would require drawing down the level considerably. Complaints from the Jordan Narrows area flowing wells in northern Utah Valley are drying. This situation appears to be drought related. Improve and redo their places of use and improve water conveyance, which may require a change application.

### **IV. Adjournment**

The next meeting will be held on August in room 314. The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 a.m.